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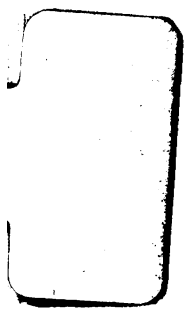

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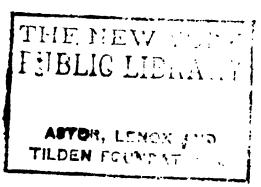
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TO

MY MOTHER

Mount Vernon

Colonial Verses

MOUNT VERNON

Home of our bravest and our best,
  For thee, as for a shrine,
The pilgrims of the east and west
  Eternal laurels twine.
A hundred years of sun and snow
  Have looked upon thine eaves,
Have seen the early blossoms blow,
  Wept Autumn's crimson leaves.

The river, as it slips along
  To join the distant sea,
Chants loud and clear a silver song
  To forest-land and lea.

It bears a message from afar
  Of cities strong and great,
Each safe beneath the guardian star
  That smiles on every State.

Thy walls the Nation's secrets hold ;
  The dead—who ne'er will die—
Were guests within thy halls of old,
  But now asleep they lie ;
While name and fame will live for aye,
  Till pride and power cease,
Of one who will be writ alway
  The first in war or peace.

The Drawing-Room

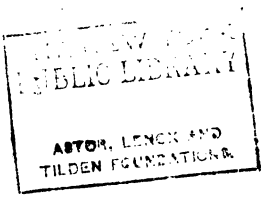
THE DRAWING-ROOM

Light-hearted gallant and maid
Here tripped a measure of yore,
Powder and patch and brocade.

Here in close converse they strayed,
Bright were the smiles that they wore,
Light-hearted gallant and maid.

Mars came as Cupid arrayed,
Donning in respite from war
Powder and patch and brocade.

Cupid the warrior played,
Having of arrows a store.
Light-hearted gallant and maid.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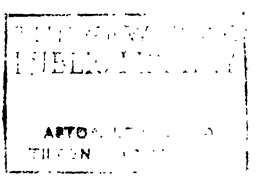
What were the words that you said?
What were the vows that you swore?
Powder and patch and brocade.

Sad that life's roses should fade!
Sad that we see you no more,
Light-hearted gallant and maid;
Powder and patch and brocade.

THE BANQUET-ROOM

Here once fair garlands hung,
Here once gay laughter rung,
Here once brave songs were sung,
And tales were told
Of how, by lucky chance
Or lofty circumstance,
Our Godmother was France,
In days of old.

Men spoke of field and camp,
Of dull suspense, or tramp
Through evening's cold and damp
O'er plain and hill;
Of how all fought, some fell—
Brothers they had loved well,
Whose worth they scarce could tell,
Whose hearts were still.

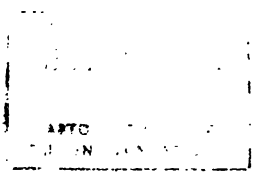


Anon, in lighter vein,
They spoke in gayer strain,
And mirth and wit did reign,
Until a toast,
To quell unwonted zest,
To silence gibe and jest,
Did one and all request
Of their grave host.

He rose, with gentle grace,
A look upon his face
That all within the place
Could understand.
He held aloft his wine,
"May stars forever shine
On thee and all of thine,
God keep our land!"

THE MUSIC-ROOM

Nellie Custis' spinet,
And George Washington's flute:
Ah ! we sigh with regret
O'er the flute and spinet.
There are souls in them yet—
Though they feign to be mute;
Nellie Custis' spinet,
And George Washington's flute.

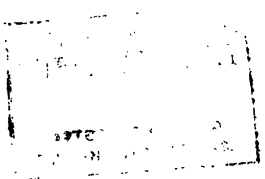


The Stairway

THE STAIRWAY

Stairway, worn by the tread of Time,
The echoes around thee blending
Present and Past, in mingled chime,
Sound clear and sweet,
Like willing feet
Every morn to work descending.

Slowly again they upward climb,
The day and its cares are ending;
Pauses—like broken staves of rhyme—
In silence greet
The weary feet
Every night to rest ascending.



Washington's Room

WASHINGTON'S ROOM

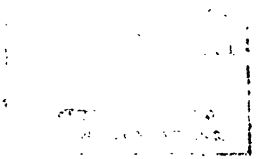
Now we stand beside the open door,
And all the room beyond is bathed in light—
The golden sunlight thou didst hail of yore;
The smile that kissed away the tears of night,
And in its touch God's daily promise bore.
A benediction that put care to flight
And gave thee strength to face the world; aye, more,
That lit thy pathway, guiding thee aright.

How many dawns thou didst to care awake,
Each dawn attended with new hopes and fears;
Forever faithful, didst thy burden take,
Praying that peace might bless the unborn years,

WASHINGTON'S ROOM

Silent we stand beside the open door,
And all the room beyond is bathed in light—
The g[illegible] thou didst hail of yore;
The [illegible] the tears of
[illegible]
And [illegible] bore.
A [illegible]
And gave [illegible] ld;
aye, more,
That lit thy pathway [illegible]

How many dawns thou [illegible]
Each dawn attended [illegible] new hopes and
fears;
Forever faithful, didst thy burden take,
Praying that peace might bless the uni-
years,

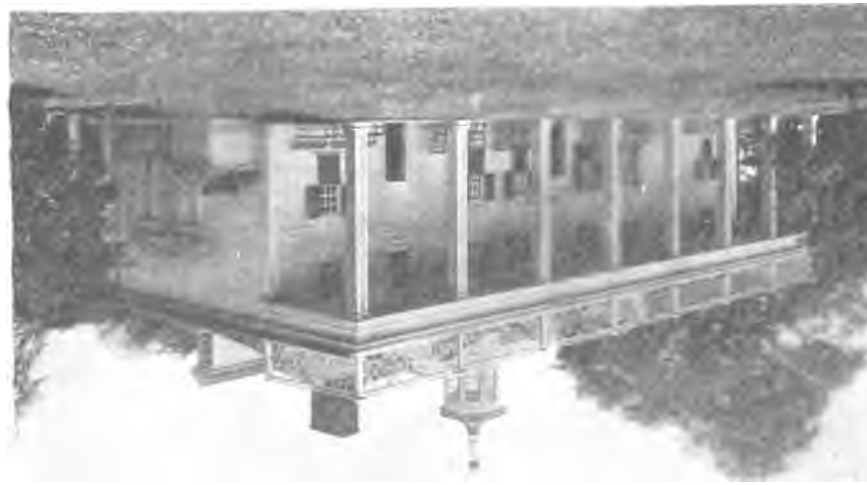


And for thy Country and thy kindred's sake
Toiled with a patience that all earth reveres !
How many nights thy heart did well nigh break
To know thy Motherland was drenched with tears !

And it was here thou didst at last find rest—
The work was done, the time had come to sleep ;
The high, the humble, prosperous, oppressed,
One in their sorrow, o'er thy couch did weep.
Our ceaseless gratitude by tongues professed,
But in our hearts there lyeth still more deep
A love, which with our deeds we would attest
To prove us worthy of the trust we keep.

INTERLUDE

Now from the homestead forth we stray,
Though 'neath its porch we fain would
linger,
The world without holds holiday,
Touched by Dame Nature's jewelled finger.



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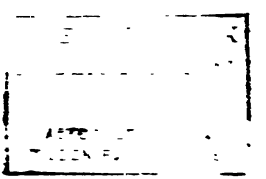
The Garden

THE GARDEN

In the garden every year,
When the skies wax blue and clear,
We the Summer's footfall hear;
One by one
Do the flowers re-appear
'Neath the sun.

Primrose buds with hearts of gold,
Pansies, bringing thoughts of old,
Tricked in colors manifold;
Mallows tall,
Gladioli, brave and bold,
Guarding all.



Daffodil, and daisy white,
With the dew bespangled bright,
Quiver in a shy delight,
As they peep;
Then they close their eyes at night,
Fall asleep.

There the lily sways a queen,
And quaint rosemary we glean,
While the hollyhock is seen
With the phlox,
Twixt the borders trim and green
Of the box.

Like the lilt of distant streams,
Records of remembered dreams,
Echoes of forgotten themes,
Fill the air;
Calling us away, it seems,
Otherwhere.

Calling us to join the throng
That in hope and faith were strong,
That avenged the Nation's wrong
With the sword;
That to history belong
For reward.

They that shone in grave debate,
And whose counsel carried weight
With the arbiters of State,
Day by day;
They that in the field were great,
Won the bay.

They that strove to set us free,
Gave the people sovereignty,
Bought for mankind liberty,
Sweet their rest;
For to all eternity
They are blest.

The Spinning-House

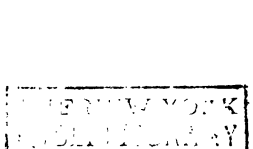
THE SPINNING-HOUSE

Merry whirring of the wheel,
Loud the din!
Twisting, turning speeds the reel
Maidens spin.

Though the task their patience tax,
They are gay;
Lightly drawing threads of flax
All the day.

Half in shine and half in gloom,
Sit the throng;
With the murmur of the loom
Comes a song.

* * * * *



In a mist of smiles and tears,
Hark! I vow
It still echoes through the years,
Hear it now!

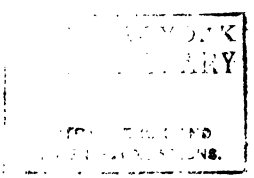
Song of old, thy sacred strain
Pray impart,
Let me hold thy sweet refrain
In my heart.

BENEATH THE TREES

Beneath the trees at even-glow
I wander, meditative, slow,
Where courtiers brave with gold and lace,
Befitting well the stately place,
Once gayly sauntered to and fro.

On velvet turf by green hedge-row
I picture statesman, scholar, beau,
And dainty damsel fair of face,
Beneath the trees.

The rays upon the dial show
How swift the deepening shadows grow.
The noble fathers of our race
Are gone, with all their wit and grace.
They laid their ashes long ago
Beneath the trees.



Washington's Tomb

WASHINGTON'S TOMB

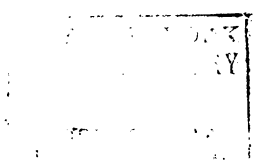
Would we could coin for thee new words of praise;
To call thee only great, is meaningless;
Thou didst the woes of humankind redress,
And the blest standard of our freedom raise;
Didst lead us safe o'er strange, untrodden ways,
And in thy life—that did all truth express—
Teach us thy cherished creed which we confess,
The equal rights of men to crown their days.

W[illegible] for thee new w[illegible]

To call thee only great, is meaningless;
Thou didst the wiles of [illegible] dress,
And the b[illegible] [illegible]
Didst [illegible]

[illegible] express—
[illegible] creed which we

[illegible] crown their days.



Thou dost not sleep in sound of city's toil ;
The din of traffic, murmur of the mart,
Are far away ; within thy native soil
We leave thee, heart of honor, Honor's heart;
Not in cathedral's gorgeous sculptured gloom,
But 'neath thy much loved stars, a fitter tomb.

DV22 [redacted].

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